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Nasty Women and Bad Hombres (Review)

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Book Review

Nasty Women and Bad Hombres: Gender and Race in the 2016 Presidential Election. Edited by Christine A. Kray, Tamar W. Carroll and Hinda Mandell. University of Rochester Press. Boydell. 2018. xvi + 374 pp. £19.99.

The collection is motivated by a simple question, posed by the author of the 'Foreword' as she stood in the rain in the Mt. Hope Cemetery, Susan B. Anthony's final resting place, the day after the 2016 presidential contest ended: 'What were we to make of the election?' (p. viii). The twenty-five chapters by interdisciplinary scholars explore the intersections of race and gender in the campaigns of Hillary Rodham Clinton and Donald Trump and the subsequent election of the latter. Concerned with 'both history and the historical imagination' (p. 1), the authors herein discuss not just what happened, but also how various Americans – the candidates themselves, their voters, their opponents, journalists, pundits, even daytime television show hosts – understood what happened, and how those participants and observers connected the campaigns to historical figures, events and ideas. These connections are clear from the opening of the book, the 'Foreword' by Deborah L. Hughes, President and CEO of the Susan B. Anthony Museum and House, followed a few pages later by a reprint of a full-page poster exhorting readers to 'Celebrate an Historic Election Day with Susan B. Anthony' (p. 3), produced by the City of Rochester for 8 November 2016. Coupled with the stated mission of the book to offer an intersectional analysis, this heavy, initially unproblematic emphasis on Anthony – famed suffragist known at times for her overt racism in the pursuit of the vote for women – is a bit incongruous. Although this problem is explicitly discussed in later chapters by Michael J. Brown, Christine A. Kray and Katie Terezakis, this choice of opener sets the tone for the book: the chapters themselves are uneven in the quality of research and depth of analysis.

Nasty Women and Bad Hombres is divided into five sections, beginning with 'Aggressive and Subordinate Masculinities'. This section features quite a bit of repetitive analysis of gendered representations of Trump and Clinton, although Beth L. Boser and R. Brandon Anderson's chapter on Tim Kaine, 'Meet Your New Dad', covers new ground. The two chapters on Trump's racism, particularly his anti-Mexican xenophobia, say little that we don't know already, although the authors do offer much-needed statistics and historical analysis of immigration trends as evidence to refute right-wing claims. This work could be useful in high school and undergraduate classrooms to quantify and rectify the lies told by Trump on this issue.

Part 2, 'Feminist Predecessors', is by far the most consistently strong section of the five, featuring excellent historicization of Shirley Chisholm's 1972 campaign by Barbara Winslow and Michael J. Brown's thoughtful comparison of the 'friends for freedom', Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass (p. 121), with the more recent dynamic of Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. Joanna Weiss's

'The Impossibilities of Hillary Clinton as a Self-Made Woman' is smart and sharp, although at a brief two and a half pages it leaves the readers wanting more.

Part 3, 'Baking Cookies and Grabbing Pussies: Misogyny and Sexual Politics', like some of the contributions in the first section, covers well-trodden ground about evangelical support for Trump and internalized misogyny in white women's voting patterns. Although it is brief, Steve Almond's cleverly titled personal essay, 'How to Turn a Bernie Bro into a Russian Bot', describes a disturbing trend: the combination of 'Cold War-style Russian propaganda and old-fashioned American misogyny' that transformed a progressive Sanders supporter into 'a full-fledged Hillary hater, an angry young man' who reposted 'fake news', trolled other progressives, and eventually 'greeted the election of Donald Trump with a strange elation' (p. 228). Political scientists, take heed – this phenomenon deserves far more research.

Part 4 on Election Day features some interesting research methods, including an analysis of 'hashtag feminism' (p. 236) by Gina Masullo Chen and Kelsey N. Whipple, and interviews by Christine A. Kray with visitors to Susan B. Anthony's gravesite on the day itself. Part 5, 'The Future is Female', finally gets to the meat of some of what scholars can and should do with the analysis contained herein. In particular, Katie Terezakis's discussion of historical 'amnesia' in the Mt. Hope Cemetery – the problem that opens this collection – and Nietzsche's concept of 'critical history' serves as both excellent post-election analysis and an indication of how to 'free historical action by interrogating it' (p. 317), a call to arms supported by Jamia Wilson's final chapter, a clear warning about the perils of 'benevolent patriarchy' (p. 331).

In terms of quantifying what most of us generally already know, but do not readily have the statistics or analysis for, and in terms of offering nuanced discussions of intersectional historical contexts, the collection could prove to be quite useful to students, and each entry can easily stand alone as an assignment. Kudos to these contributors for defying academic stereotypes about deadlines and getting this book out a mere two years into Trump's presidency. One wonders how the next two years will support or alter the authors' claims, although, at this writing, the government has been shut down for almost a month as Trump daily foments racist myths about immigration, and three women have already thrown their hats into the ring for the 2020 Democratic nomination, offering Trump a chance to resurrect some of his sexist one-liners from the 2016 campaign trail, so it appears that the chapters in *Nasty Women and Bad Hombres* might take on the mantle of opening salvo in what is likely to be a fruitful and troubling subfield of presidential history: Trump Studies.

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